

Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: _____ G. _____

Date: September 27, 2006

Topic: First Review of a Request to Extend Approval of an Alternative Accreditation Plan and Approval of Accreditation Ratings for Mt. Vernon Middle School and New Bridge School in Henrico County Public Schools

Presenter: Mrs. Kathleen M. Smith, Director of the Office of School Improvement
Mr. Frederick S. Morton, IV, Division Superintendent, Henrico County Public Schools

Telephone Number: 804-225-2865 **E-Mail Address:** Kathleen.Smith@doe.virginia.gov

Origin:

☐ Topic presented for information only (no board action required)

☒ Board review required by
☐ State or federal law or regulation
☒ Board of Education regulation
☐ Other: _____

☒ Action requested at this meeting ☐ Action requested at future meeting: _____
(date)

Previous Review/Action:

☐ No previous board review/action

☒ Previous review/action
date November 30, 2005

action Approval of the Alternative Accreditation Plan from Henrico County Public Schools

Background Information:

The *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* effective September 7, 2006, Section 8 VAC 20-131.280.C. of the standards states:

Subject to the provisions of 8 VAC 20-131-330, the governing school board of special purpose schools such as those provided for in §22.1-26 of the Code, Governor's schools, special education schools, alternative schools, or career and technical schools that serve as the student's school of principal enrollment may seek approval of an alternative accreditation plan from the Board of Education. Special purpose schools with alternative accreditation plans shall be evaluated on standards appropriate to the programs offered in the school and approved by the Board prior to August 1 of the school year for which approval is requested. Any student graduating from a special purpose school with a Standard, Advanced Studies, or Modified Standard Diploma must meet the requirements prescribed in 8 VAC 20-131-50.

Henrico County Public Schools received approval by the Board of Education for one-year alternative accreditation plans for New Bridge School and Mt. Vernon Middle School on November 30, 2005. These approvals included the provision that future extensions would be contingent upon the submission of an evaluation from each school showing that the stated objectives of the program and evaluative criteria had been met.

Summary of Major Elements:

New Bridge School and Mt. Vernon Middle School are alternative schools. New Bridge School serves students grades 3-8, and Mt. Vernon serves students grades 6-8. These students are consistently functioning below grade level in reading and/or mathematics and are unlikely to make up academic deficits in a traditional elementary or middle school setting. Students identified for this alternative program have failed to respond positively to the traditional school's intervention strategies and have fallen into the at-risk category of being retained one or more years. For New Bridge School, initial criteria for consideration in the program include failure on the third- or fifth-grade Standards of Learning (SOL) tests in reading, mathematics, and/or writing.

At both schools, an interdisciplinary instructional program incorporating the four major content areas is offered and includes exposure to organization and study skills and self-management for each student as specified in an Individualized Student Success (ISS) plan. A vocational program is also offered. Each student completes the Stanford Achievement Test (10th edition) and/or the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) assessments prior to entering the program to assist with the development of the student's educational plan. These assessments are also used as post-measures of student achievement. Students are placed at a grade level according to pretest scores and a review of the student's classroom performance. Students at all grades will participate in SOL testing in all four content areas.

In the approved accreditation plan, school accreditation for New Bridge School is based on the following criterion:

Scores for each test in each of the four content areas will be combined to create (composite) pass rates, one for grades 3-5 and one for grades 6-8, reflecting the interdisciplinary approach to instruction. In order to meet accreditation requirements, the composite pass rate must be 75% for grades 3-5 and 70% for grades 6-8. Scores of students in attendance for four semesters or more,

including the semester in which testing takes place, will be included in the accreditation calculation.

In the approved accreditation plan, school accreditation for Mt. Vernon Middle School is based on the following criterion:

Scores for each test in each of the four content areas will be combined to create one (composite) pass rate, reflecting the interdisciplinary approach to instruction. In order to meet accreditation requirements, the composite pass rate must be 70% for grades 6-8 combined. Scores of students in attendance for four semesters or more, including the semester in which testing takes place, will be included in the accreditation calculation.

As part of the approval of the accreditation plan, the board approved waivers to the provisions of the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*, 8 VAC 20-131-80.B, as follows:

The middle school shall provide a minimum of eight courses to students in the eighth grade. Courses in English, mathematics, science, and history/social science shall be required. Four elective courses shall be available: level one of a foreign language, one in health and physical education, one in fine arts, and one in career and technical exploration.

Based on spring 2005-2006 SOL assessments, New Bridge School met the required composite performance target of 75% at the elementary level with a pass rate of 88.33%, but with a middle level composite pass rate of 62.68%, did not meet the 70% target required in the alternative accreditation plan. Mt. Vernon earned a composite rate of 65.41% which does not meet the 70% target in the alternative accreditation plan.

The two schools are applying for a rating of Accreditation Withheld/Improving School Near Accreditation in accordance with 8 VAC 20-131-300. The 70% pass rate in English and the 60% combined pass rate in other subjects for this accreditation do not apply as the alternative accreditation plan for 2005-2006 specifies a composite accountability measure for each school. However, both schools have increased their 1999 SOL pass rates by more than 25%, which is required for a rating of Accreditation Withheld/Improving School Near Accreditation. New Bridge shows a gain of 27.65% points over the composite rate for 2003, the first year of the middle school program. Mt. Vernon shows a gain of 30.41% points over the composite rate for 1999.

Based on the continuing improvement and evaluation of these schools, Henrico County Public Schools requests a three-year extension of the alternative accreditation plans and the rating of Accreditation Withheld/Improving School Near Accreditation for New Bridge School and Mt. Vernon Middle School.

Superintendent's Recommendation: The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education waive first review, approve the request to extend the alternative accreditation plans for three years and approve the rating of Accreditation Withheld/Improving School Near Accreditation for New Bridge School and Mt. Vernon Middle School.

Impact on Resources: There is no impact on the resources of the Department of Education.

Timetable for Further Review/Action: Staff of the Department of Education will advise the Henrico County Public Schools of the Board's action.

HENRICO COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FRED S. MORTON, IV
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS



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August 10, 2006

received
ALL 11

Dr. Mark Emblidge
President, State Board of Education
P.O. Box 2120
Richmond, VA 23218-2120

Dear Dr. Emblidge;

Pursuant to the Alternative Accreditation Plans in effect for Mt. Vernon Middle School and New Bridge School, Henrico County Public Schools is reporting the accreditation status for these schools based on scores earned during the 2005-06 school year. Accreditation for both schools is based on a composite pass rate that includes all SOL tests administered in each content area at each grade level which was approved by the Board of Education at its meeting on November 30, 2005. The composite performance target for Mt. Vernon is a 70% pass rate; the composite performance targets for New Bridge are 70% at the middle grades and 75% at the elementary grades.

In fall 2005, there were 61 students in membership at Mt. Vernon (grades 6-8) and 133 students in membership at New Bridge (grades 3-8.) Pursuant to the plan, all students at both schools participate fully in the assessment program. At Mt. Vernon, 209 SOL tests were administered. At New Bridge, 183 tests were administered at the elementary level, and 297 tests were administered at the middle level. Students are considered transfer students if they are in attendance at their respective alternative school for less than four semesters. By excluding transfer students, 159 scores are included in the adjusted composite pass rate for Mt. Vernon Middle School, and 120 and 209 scores are included in the adjusted composite pass rates for New Bridge School at the elementary and middle levels respectively.

The attached spreadsheet outlines the composite pass rates earned for these school and compares these pass rates to the accreditation target and to a composite pass rate calculated for spring 1999 or the first year the program was offered (as we were advised to do by staff of the Department of Education). Based on our local preliminary calculation, Mt. Vernon earned a composite pass rate of 65.41%, which is short of the 70% target, but 30.41% points above the composite earned in spring 1999. New Bridge School with an elementary composite of 88.33% exceeds the performance target of 75%. With a middle level composite pass rate of 62.68%, New Bridge is short of the 70% target but 27.65% points above the composite earned in spring 2003, which is the first year the middle school program was offered.

Based upon the composite pass rates earned, we are requesting that the rating of Accreditation Withheld/Improving School Near Accreditation be awarded to both Mt. Vernon Middle School and New Bridge School. To achieve this rating, we are requesting a waiver of the requirement in 8 VAC 20-131-300.C. of the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* for a 70% pass rate in English and a composite pass rate of 60% in the other content areas, as the accreditation ratings for these two schools are based on an overall composite pass rate rather than content-specific performance targets as outlined in the alternative accreditation plans approved by the Board. New Bridge School exceeded the elementary performance target, and both New Bridge School and Mt. Vernon Middle School exceeded the required 25% point gain needed to meet the requirement for Accreditation Withheld/Improving School Near Accreditation. These points are summarized below.

1. 70% pass rate in English = DOES NOT APPLY. The alternative accreditation plan for this school specifies a composite accountability measure.
2. 60% combined pass rate in other subjects = DOES NOT APPLY. The alternative accreditation plan for this school specifies a composite accountability measure.
3. 25% increase over 1999 SOL pass rates in areas below 70% = MET. Based on a composite calculated for each school, Mt. Vernon shows a gain of 30.41% points over the composite rate for 1999. New Bridge shows a gain of 27.65% points over the composite rate for 2003, the first year of the middle school program.

Note: New Bridge School MET the composite performance target of 75% at the elementary level with a pass rate of 88.33%.

Both Mt. Vernon Middle School and New Bridge Schools are in their first year under a new instructional model and an alternative accreditation plan. We realize the request for the "Accreditation Withheld/Improving School Near Accreditation" status is unusual in that the regulations were designed with traditional schools in mind. The special purpose of these schools, in addressing the academic needs of at-risk students, makes it unique and, we believe, warrants the application of this accreditation status.

We are aware that this rating is available for a single year. Given the massive changes in the instructional program and such tremendous improvements in the achievement of the students attending the schools, we are confident that both schools will continue to show gains and will meet the requirements to be rated Fully Accredited if given additional time to do so. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you need additional information for your deliberations. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,


Fred S. Morton

Cc: Dr. Billy Cannaday, Jr.
Dr. Patricia Wright
Ms. Kathleen Smith

Enclosure

Mmk,
Had say you today. what
a super beginning. please
let me know if you have
questions

**Justification for Request for 2006-07 Accreditation Rating of
ACCREDITATION WITHHELD/IMPROVING SCHOOL NEAR ACCREDITATION
Mt. Vernon and New Bridge Schools**

New Bridge Grade 8 - 2003

Composite - 2006 (Target = 70%)

Adjusted
Composite
35.03%

+ 27.65%

Adjusted
Composite
62.68%

**Increased Passing Rate by more than 25%
over 2002-03 (first year of opening)**

New Bridge Grade 3 & 5 - 2000

Composite - 2006 (Target = 75%)

Adjusted
Composite
10.58%

+ 77.75%

Adjusted
Composite
88.33%

Met 75% Pass Rate Target

Mt. Vernon Grade 8 - 1999

Composite - 2006 (Target = 70%)

Adjusted
Composite
35.00%

+ 30.41%

Adjusted
Composite
65.41%

**Increased Passing Rate by more than 25%
over 1998-99 Rate**

A Status Report and Request for Extension of the Alternative Accreditation Model for Mt. Vernon Middle School

Background:

- In November 2005, the Board of Education approved an alternative accreditation model for Mt. Vernon Middle School, a non-traditional educational setting serving students in grades 6-8 in Henrico County.
- The school is designed to serve middle school students who:
 - are consistently functioning below grade level in reading and/or mathematics,
 - may have failed one or more SOL or local criterion-referenced tests,
 - are at-risk of being retained, and/or
 - have been unresponsive to traditional instructional strategies and the academic and behavioral intervention techniques used in comprehensive school settings.
- Key components of the instructional model include:
 - individualized student educational plans,
 - an interdisciplinary instructional program incorporating the four major content areas,
 - career and technical education course offerings,
 - pre- and post-achievement assessments,
 - individualized course schedules,
 - a highly qualified team of teachers,
 - an applied approach to instruction,
 - 12:1 PTR,
 - a focus on the development of self-management and adjustment skills,
 - daily physical activity, and
 - student opportunities for career exploration.
- The Board of Education approved accreditation for Mt. Vernon based on:
 - the employment of highly qualified teachers who are licensed and endorsed in their content area
 - the school's ability to meet the pre-accreditation requirements outlined in the Standards of Accreditation
 - the creation of one composite pass rate incorporating scores across content areas with a target of 70% for Grade 6-8 students
 - the expectation that an evaluation would be conducted to measure program effectiveness
- The following waiver was requested and approved:
 - Required middle school electives (foreign language). (8 VAC 20-131-90 B)

2005-06 School Year Results:

Preliminary Results from the Standards of Learning Tests

- All students participated fully in the assessment program.
- Based on preliminary adjusted results, Mt. Vernon earned a composite pass rate of 65.41%, which is short of the 70% target, but 30.41% points above the composite earned in spring 1999.

- Henrico County Public Schools has submitted a request for Mt. Vernon Middle School to be awarded the rating of Accreditation Withheld/Improving School Near Accreditation due to the new instructional program being implemented at this school.

Other Data

- Attendance rates have remained stable at 88% in 2004-05 and 2005-06.
- The percentage of students being promoted to the next grade level has increased from 92% in 2004-05 to 97% in 2005-06.
- In fall 2005, the schools average class size was 6.0 students with 5.5 in English, 6.1 in Math, 6.1 in Science, and 6.1 in Social Studies.
- Henrico Assessment results, which is a locally developed assessment given in non-SOL tested content areas at each grade level, show a dramatic increase of students who passed the 6th grade Science assessment from 17% in 2004-05 to 79% in 2005-06. Science scores for 7th graders remained stable with 61% of students passing the assessment. Passing scores for the 6th grade writing test decreased from 70% of students passing in 2004-05 to 58% in 2005-06. Similarly, 75% of 7th graders passed the writing assessment in 2005-06 compared to 80% in 2004-05. Focus will be directed towards areas where improvement is needed.

Alternative Accreditation Surveys

- In May 2006, surveys were developed and administered to aid in evaluating the effectiveness of the interdisciplinary alternative accreditation model. Surveys were developed with input from core stakeholders and were completed by students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Results from the surveys yielded positive findings and have aided in identifying areas for improvements to the program in the 2006-07 school year.
- Key findings were as follows:
 - Students, parents, and teachers reported improvements in student grades since attending this school and the beginning of the academic year.
 - Since coming to this school, students feel that they have improved their organizational skills, career skills, and behavior management skills. However, they would like more guidance in improving their test taking skills and additional support with behavior management strategies.
 - The majority of students, parents, and teachers say that school initiatives to motivate students academically and behaviorally and the school-wide tutoring program are effective.
 - Students and parents reported that they were able to contribute to the individualized educational plan and would like more communication regarding their progress towards these goals.
 - Students, teachers, and administrators agree that an interdisciplinary instructional model is being used and the majority of teachers are participating in biweekly interdisciplinary team meetings. Teachers report that they would benefit from additional training in how to create interdisciplinary lessons across content areas. Beginning in 2006-07, the master schedule allows for common planning time for teachers.

- Communication between school staff and parents is commendable and all stakeholders agree that teachers and administrators are using various methods for communicating with families.

Planned Follow-up and Evaluation:

- The progress of students promoted from the program will be monitored as they enter into a comprehensive high school through school visits by the alternative school counselor each nine weeks for a minimum of one year. Progress reports will be sent to parents after each follow-up meeting. Former students will also be interviewed during their 9th and 10th grades by their instructors from Mt. Vernon in order to make program improvements and refinements.
- A transitioned student survey will be created and administered to promoted students to gather feedback regarding the transition process and adjustment to the comprehensive school setting.
- Additional data will continue to be evaluated, including benchmark test results, standardized test scores, and attendance reports.
- Efforts will continue to improve communication with students and parents, and increase parent participation.
- Efforts and results are being examined and revised to find the most successful approaches for these students to experience successes for the long-term.

Request for Extension:

- Request a three-year approval of the alternative accreditation plan with annual reports submitted to the Board of Education on our progress.

A Status Report and Request for Extension of the Alternative Accreditation Model for New Bridge School

Background:

- In November 2005, the Board of Education approved an alternative accreditation model for New Bridge School, a non-traditional educational setting serving students in grades 3-8 in Henrico County.
- The school is designed to serve elementary and middle school students who:
 - are consistently functioning below grade level in reading and/or mathematics,
 - may have failed one or more SOL or local criterion-referenced tests,
 - are at-risk of being retained, and/or
 - have been unresponsive to traditional instructional strategies and the academic and behavioral intervention techniques used in comprehensive school settings.
- Key components of the instructional model include:
 - individualized student educational plans,
 - an interdisciplinary instructional program incorporating the four major content areas,
 - career and technical education course offerings for students in grades 6-8,
 - pre- and post-achievement assessments,
 - individualized course schedules,
 - a highly qualified team of teachers,
 - an applied approach to instruction,
 - 12:1 PTR,
 - a focus on the development of self-management and adjustment skills,
 - daily physical activity, and
 - student opportunities for career exploration.
- The Board of Education approved accreditation for New Bridge based on:
 - the employment of highly qualified teachers who are licensed and endorsed in their content area
 - the school's ability to meet the pre-accreditation requirements outlined in the Standards of Accreditation
 - the creation of a composite pass rate for Grade 3-5 (75% target) and Grade 6-8 (70% target) incorporating scores across content areas
 - the expectation that an evaluation would be conducted to measure program effectiveness
- The following waiver was requested and approved:
 - Required middle school electives (foreign language). (8 VAC 20-131-90 B)

2005-06 School Year Results:

Preliminary Results from the Standards of Learning Tests

- All students participated fully in the assessment program.
- Based on preliminary adjusted results, New Bridge School exceeded the elementary target of 75% with a composite pass rate of 88.33%. With a middle school level composite pass rate of 62.68%, New Bridge is short of the 70% target, but 27.65% points

above the composite earned in spring 2003, which is the first year the middle school program was offered.

- Henrico County Public Schools has submitted a request for New Bridge School to be awarded the rating of Accreditation Withheld/Improving School Near Accreditation due to the new instructional program being implemented at this school.

Other Data

- Attendance rates have remained stable with 90% in 2004-05 and 89% in 2005-06
- The percentage of students being promoted to the next grade level has increased from 89% in 2004-05 to 94% in 2005-06.
- In fall 2005, the schools average class size was 8.6 students with 8.3 in English, 8.7 in Math, 8.7 in Science, and 8.7 in Social Studies.
- Henrico Assessment results, which is a locally developed assessment given in non-SOL tested content areas at each grade level, show consistency in the percentage of 4th grade students who passed the Writing (80%), History (83%), and Science (57%) assessments in 2004-05 and 2005-06. Science scores for 6th graders decreased slightly from 88% passing in 2004-05 to 79% passing in 2005-06; whereas 7th grade scores increased from 93% passing to 97% passing. Passing scores for the 6th grade writing test remained steady at 81% from 2004-05 to 2005-06. However, 66% of 7th graders passed the writing assessment in 2005-06 compared to 85% in 2004-05. Focus will be directed towards areas where improvement is needed.

Alternative Accreditation Surveys

- In May 2006, surveys were developed and administered to aid in evaluating the effectiveness of the interdisciplinary alternative accreditation model. Surveys were developed with input from core stakeholders and were completed by students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Results from the surveys yielded positive findings and have aided in identifying areas for improvements to the program in the 2006-07 school year.
- Key findings were as follows:
 - Students, parents, and teachers reported improvements in student grades since attending this school and the beginning of the academic year.
 - Since coming to this school, students feel that they have improved their participation in homework, career skills, and behavior management skills. However, they may like more guidance in improving their study and test taking skills, and additional support with behavior management strategies.
 - The majority of students and parents say that school initiatives to motivate students academically and behaviorally are successful. Students also believe that the school-wide tutoring program is effective.
 - More than half of the students and parents reported that they were able to contribute to the individualized educational plan and students would like more communication regarding their progress towards these goals.
 - Students, teachers, and administrators agree that an interdisciplinary instructional model is being used and the majority of teachers are participating in biweekly interdisciplinary team meetings. Approximately half of the teachers report that they would benefit from additional training in how to create interdisciplinary

lessons across content areas. Beginning in 2006-07, the master schedule allows for common planning time for teachers.

- Communication between school staff and parents is commendable and most stakeholders agree that teachers and administrators are using various methods for communicating with families.

Planned Follow-up and Evaluation:

- The progress of students promoted from the program will be monitored as they enter into a comprehensive school through school visits by the alternative school counselor each nine weeks for a minimum of one year. Progress reports will be sent to parents after each follow-up meeting. Former students will also be interviewed during their 6th, 7th, and 8th grades or their 9th and 10th grades by their instructors from New Bridge in order to make program improvements and refinements.
- A transitioned student survey will be created and administered to promoted students to gather feedback regarding the transition process and adjustment to the comprehensive school setting.
- Additional data will continue to be evaluated, including benchmark test results, standardized test scores, and attendance reports.
- Efforts will continue to improve communication with students and parents, and increase parent participation.
- Efforts and results are being examined and revised to find the most successful approaches for these students to experience successes for the long-term.

Request for Extension:

- Request a three-year approval of the alternative accreditation plan with annual reports submitted to the Board of Education on our progress.